

# Prairie Path and Taft Ave Corridor Plan

## Existing Conditions Analysis

September 25, 2020

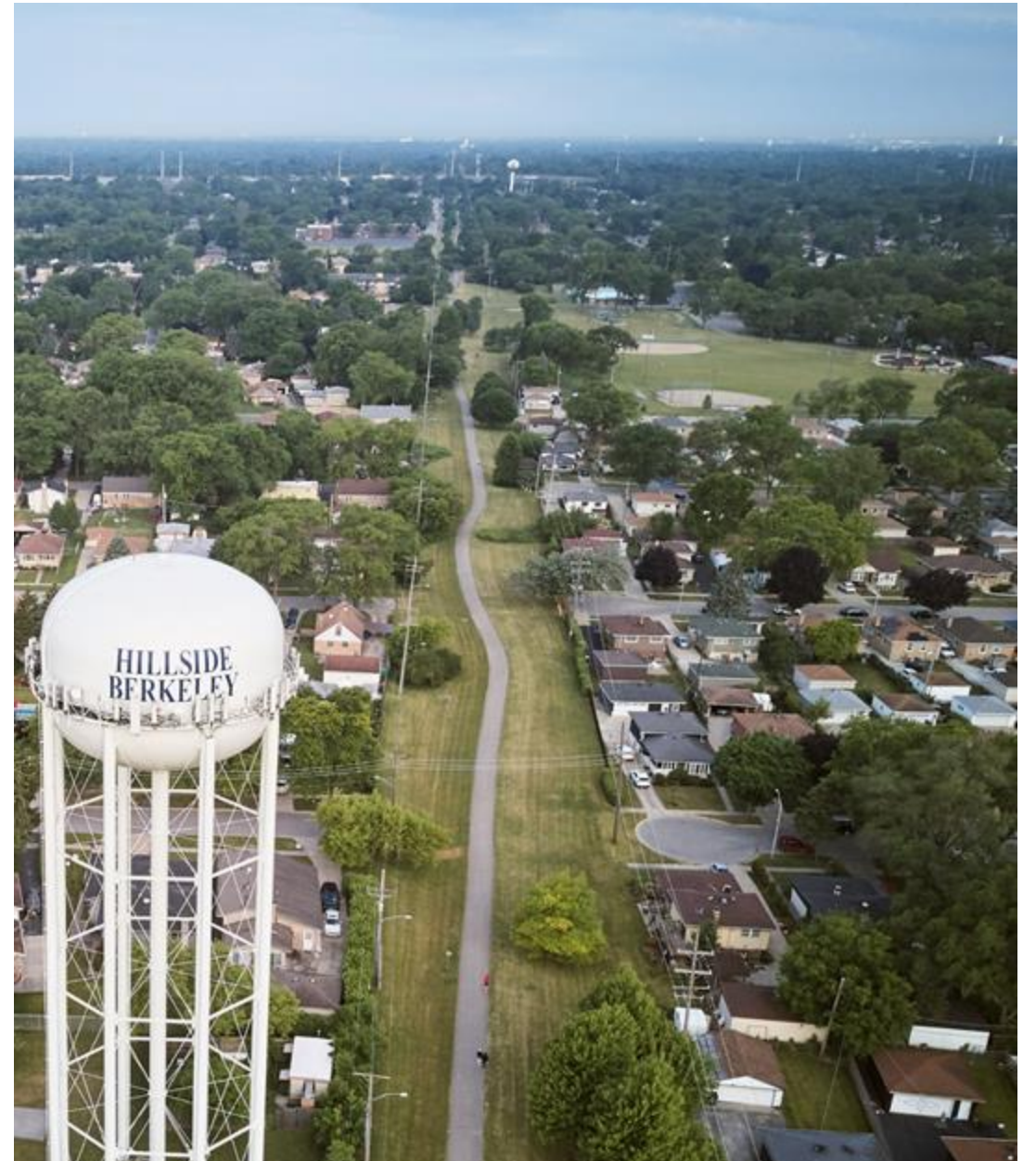
**DRAFT**



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*This project is supported through the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and The Chicago Community Trust. The Villages of Berkeley and Hillside, the Berkeley Park District, and CMAP would like to thank these funders for their support for this project.*



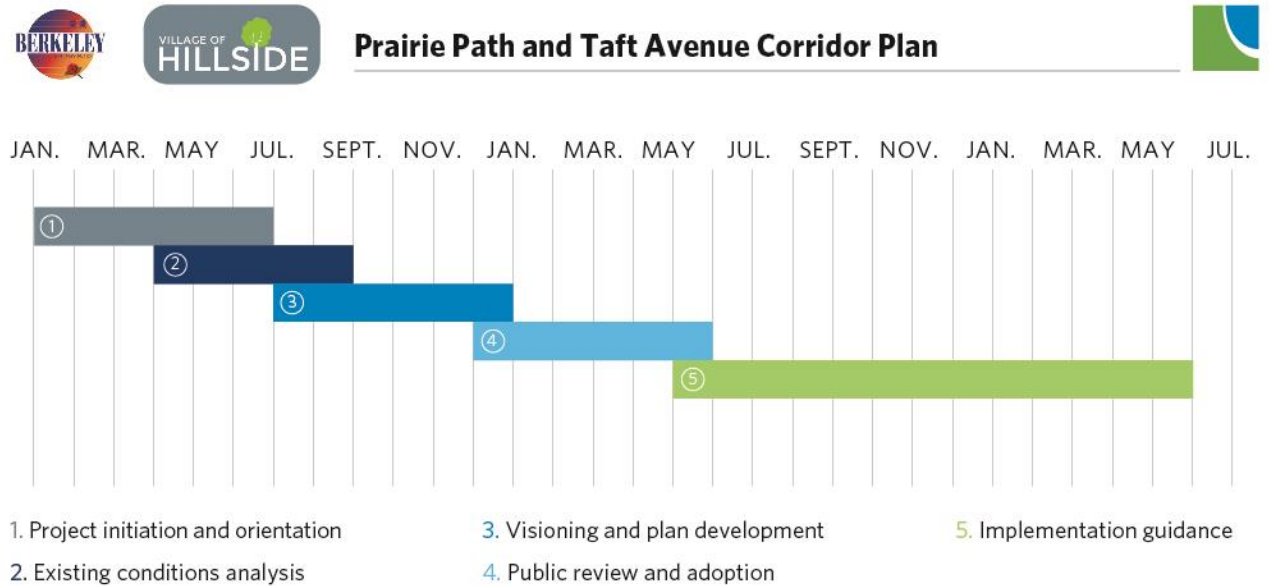


# Project Background

The Illinois Prairie Path is a 60 mile, heavily used trail that brings visitors through Berkeley, Hillside, and other communities.

CMAP will work with the three project partners – the Village of Berkeley, the Village of Hillside, and the Berkeley Park District, to create a shared vision for the Prairie Path and Taft Avenue Corridor to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic along the path, attract businesses to the area, and enhance parks and open space for residents and path users.

## Project Timeline



# Study Area Map

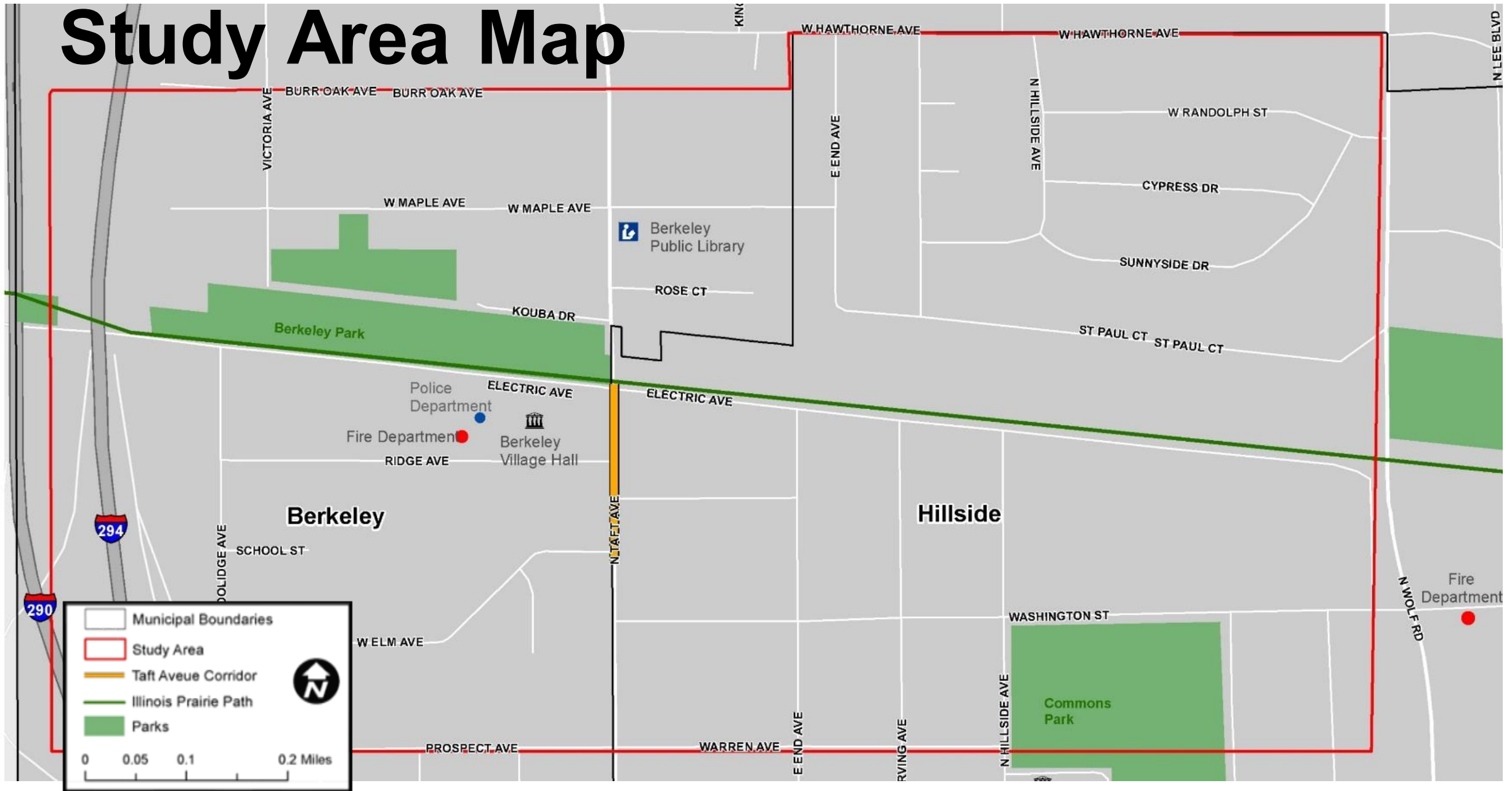


Fig. X. Study Area Map



# What will this plan cover?



**Economic Development**



**Transportation**



**Placemaking**



**Development**



# Impacts of COVID-19

This existing conditions analysis was undertaken amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's full impact is not yet known, but we anticipate changes over time to data related to demographics, economic development, and transportation in the study area. This corridor plan will provide guidance for growth and change in the study area over the next decade and beyond. The plan will ensure that the most recent data will be used throughout the plan process.





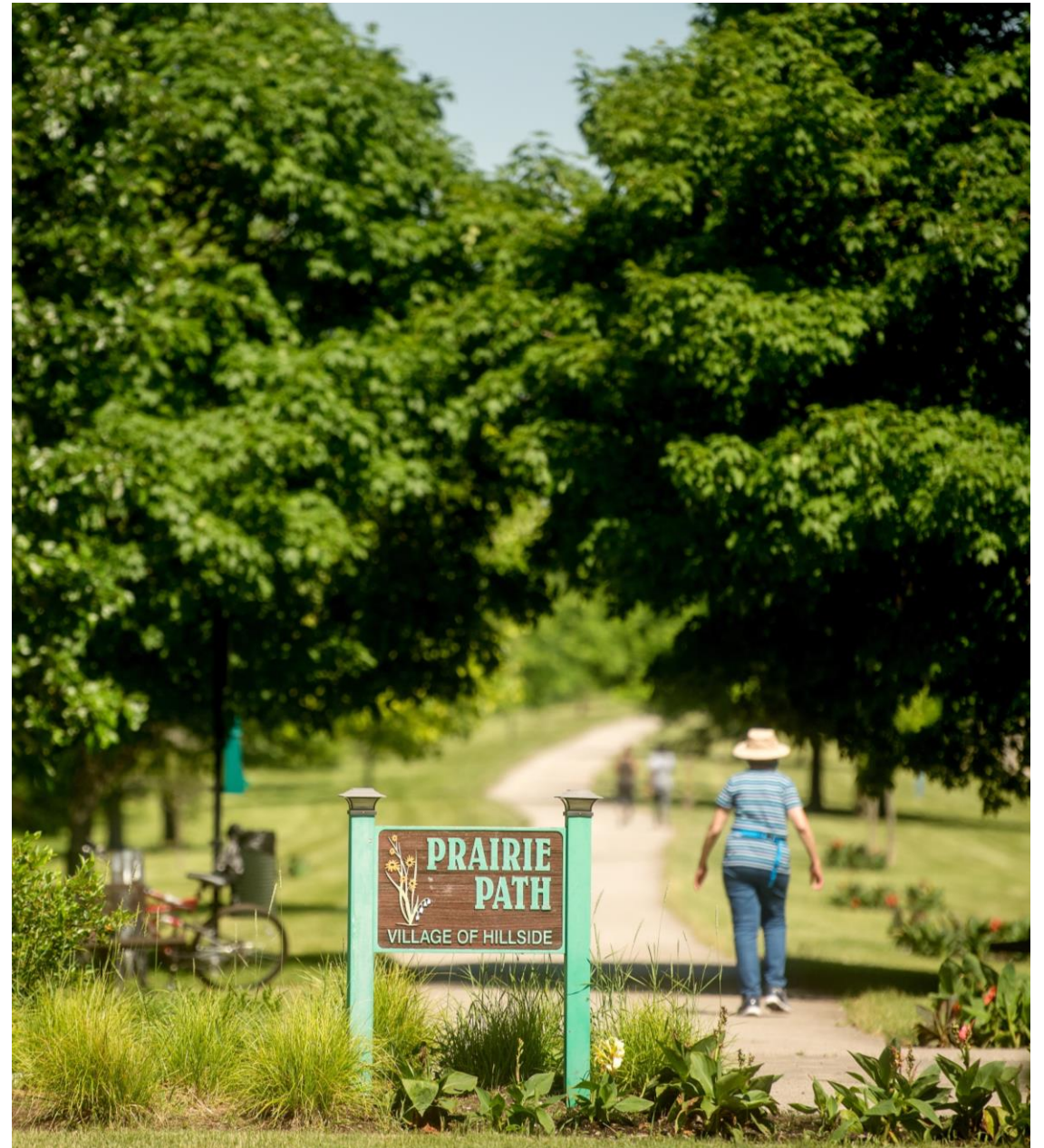


Demographics



# Introduction

Understanding who lives and works in the study area provides much needed context for the study. CMAP, the Villages of Berkeley and Hillside, the Berkeley Park District, and other stakeholders use this information to respond to the needs of existing residents and development recommendations that make sense given the context.



# Study Area Demographic Data



Median Age



Total Households



Average Household



High School Graduate



38%

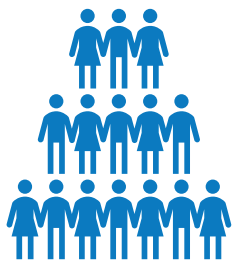
Some College



23%

Bachelor's/Graduate Degree

# Study Area Economic Data



2,571

2020  
Population



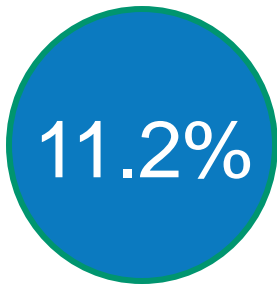
\$62,400

2020 Median  
Household Income



\$29,299

2020 Per Capita  
Income



Unemployment Rate



23

Total Businesses



214

Total Employees





Economic Development



# Introduction

In order to prosper economically, the Taft Avenue corridor needs a mix of housing, offices, shops, and restaurants. The corridor also needs access to skilled workers. Opportunities for these types of businesses are influenced by trends within Berkeley, Hillside, and the larger sub-regional and regional markets.

The following section provides an overview of this larger economic development context to ensure that the Prairie Path and Taft Avenue Corridor Plan reflects market realities.



# Study Area Employment

**Top employment sectors in the study area:**

Public Administration (54.1%), Health Care and Social Assistance (11.5%), and Retail Trade (9%)

**Top employment sectors for study area residents:**

Healthcare and Social Services (14.4%), Manufacturing (11.3%), and Retail Trade (10.8%)

**Major employers in the study area:**

Berkeley Police & Fire, West 40 Regional Safe Schools Program

Table X. Employment in Study Area, 2017

EMPLOYMENT IN STUDY AREA		
By Top Five Industry Sector	Count	Percent
Public Administration	66	54.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14	11.5%
Retail Trade	11	9.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	9	7.4%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	8	6.6%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.

Table X. Employment of Study Area Residents, 2017

EMPLOYMENT OF RESIDENTS		
By Top Five Industry Sector	Count	Percent
Health Care and Social Assistance	165	14.4%
Manufacturing	129	11.3%
Retail Trade	124	10.8%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	119	10.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	88	7.7%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.



# Berkeley and Hillside Employment

## Top employment sectors in Berkeley:

Manufacturing (57.8%), Construction (7.2%), Educational Services (6.5%)

## Top employment sectors in Hillside:

Manufacturing (18.7%), Retail Trade (14.8%) and Construction (12%)

## Top employment sectors for Berkeley and Hillside residents:

Public Administration, Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, Health Care, and Retail Trade

Table X. Employment in Berkeley, 2017

EMPLOYMENT IN BERKELEY		
By Top Five Industry Sector	Count	Percent
Manufacturing	1,112	57.8%
Construction	138	7.2%
Educational Services	125	6.5%
Information	95	4.9%
Wholesale Trade	88	4.6%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.

Table X. Employment in Hillside, 2017

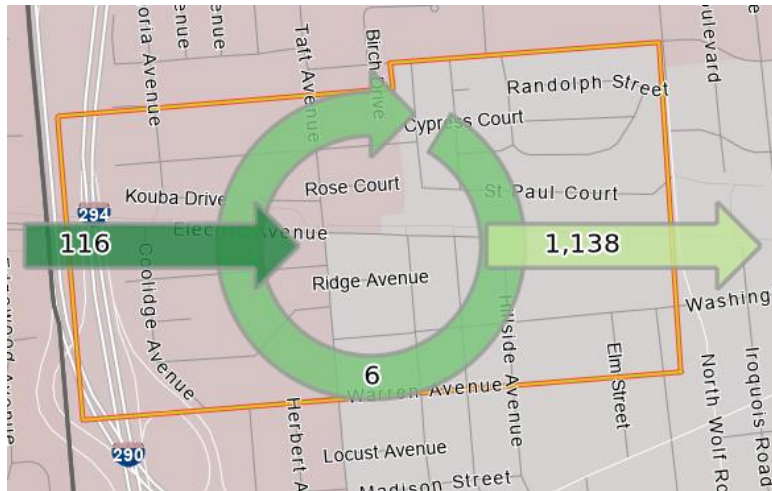
EMPLOYMENT IN HILLSIDE		
By Top Five Industry Sector	Count	Percent
Manufacturing	1,127	18.7%
Retail Trade	892	14.8%
Construction	720	12.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	575	9.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	527	8.8%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.

# Commuting Data

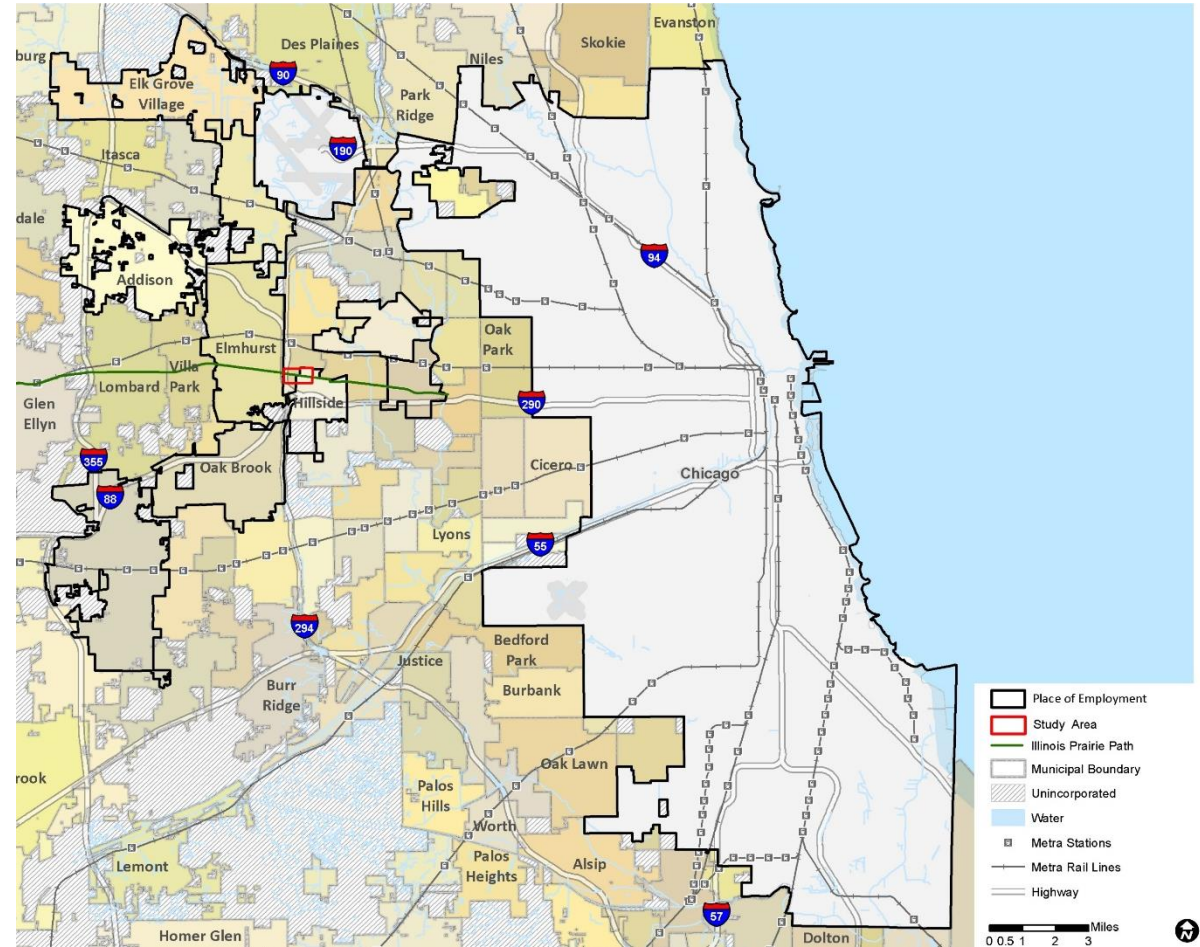
There are six people that live and work in the study area. Approximately 1,138 people live in the study area but commute to a job outside of the community, while 116 people work in the study area but live elsewhere.

About a quarter of workers that live in the study area are employed in Chicago, while others work in nearby communities of Hillside, Elmhurst, Melrose Park, and Oak Brook.



Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.

**Fig. X. Place of Employment of Study Area Residents, 2017**



Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census, 2017.

# Retail Property Inventory

**There is a little bit of retail in the corridor along Taft Avenue.**

Three retail properties totaling 9,431 square feet of space are located within the study area. All of the properties are currently occupied.

The current market rent for retail properties within the study area is \$12.85 per square foot.





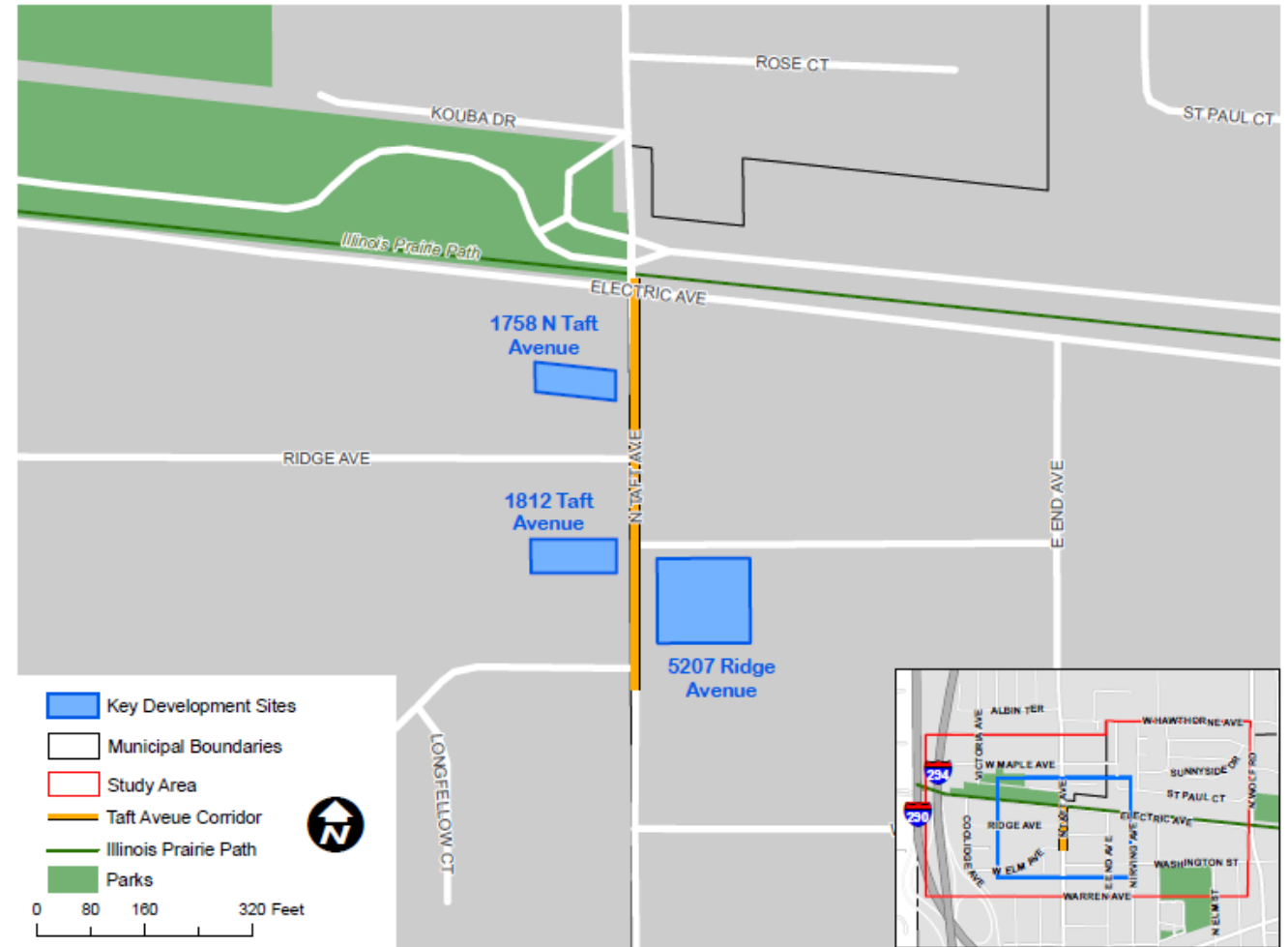
# Key Development Sites

The project team and steering committee will recommend potential uses on these development sites and solicit feedback on other development opportunities throughout the study area to investigate and consider.

Pet Celebrations site (demolished July 2020)  
1812 Taft Avenue

Berkeley – Hillside Presbyterian Church  
5207 Ridge Avenue

1758 N. Taft Avenue



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. 2020

# Retail Market Trends

## Berkeley and Hillside Retail Market

The vacancy rate for retail properties is 5.2 percent in Berkeley and 8.2 percent in Hillside.

The current market rent for retail properties is \$13.96 per square foot in Berkeley, and \$15.07 per square foot in Hillside.

## Melrose Park Area Submarket

In the larger Melrose Park area submarket, 7.9 percent of retail properties are vacant, which is higher than the overall Chicago retail market (6.3%).

The current market rent for retail properties in this submarket is \$14.98 per square foot, which is lower than the overall Chicago retail market (\$19.07).

Table X. Q2 2020 Retail Property Inventory, by Market Type

Retail Market Type	Total Rentable Building	Vacancy Rate (%)	Market Rent /SF
Study Area	9,431	0	\$12.85
Berkeley	148,245	5.2	\$13.96
Hillside	928,864	8.2	\$15.07
Melrose Park area submarket	5,933,154	7.9	\$14.68
Chicago market	565,235,941	6.3	\$19.07

Source: CMAP Analysis of CoStar Data

# Retail Sales

Within a 5-minute drive of the intersection of Electric Avenue and Taft:

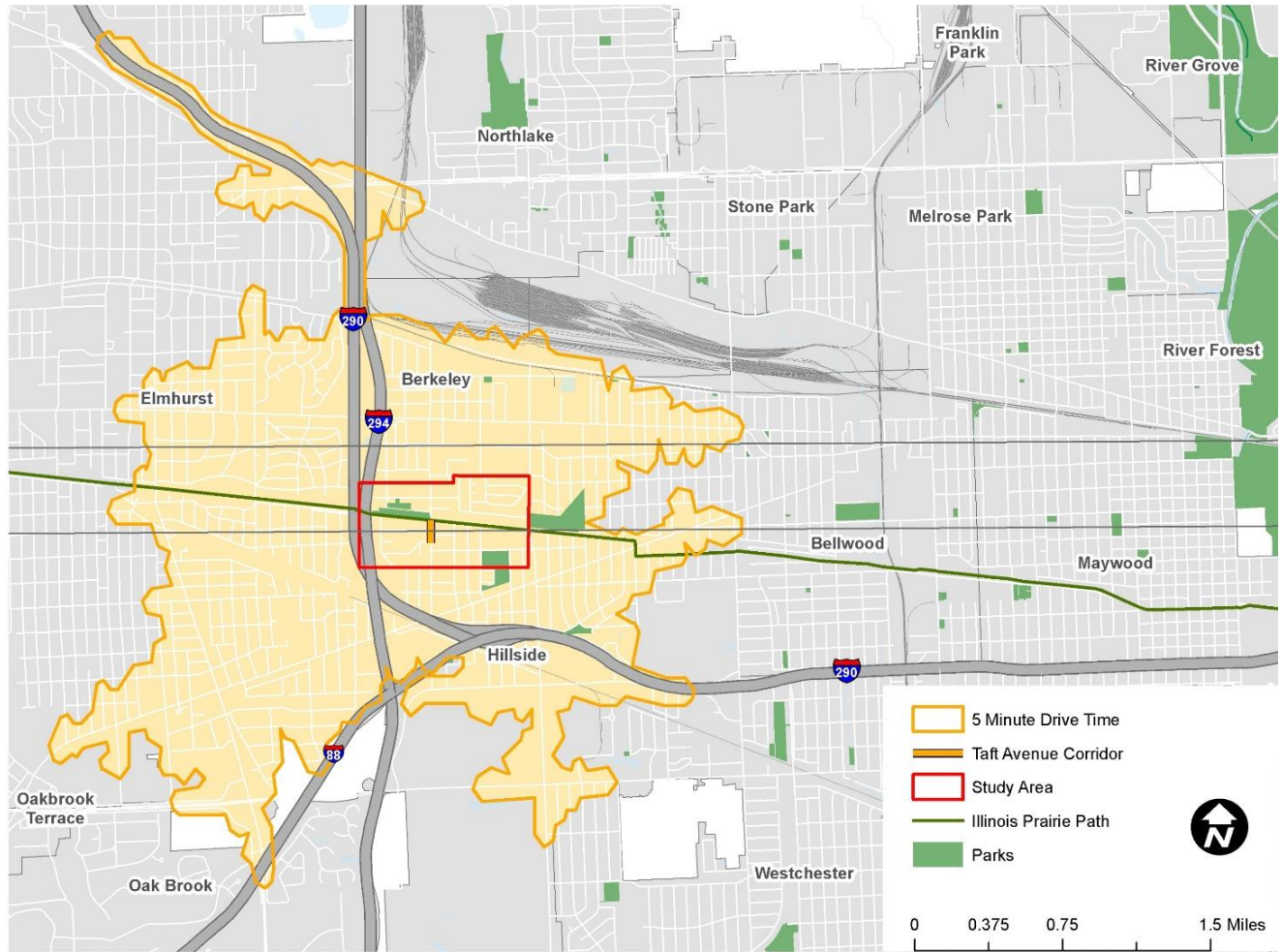
There is over \$290 million retail sales, compared to over \$460 million in retail demand from residents within this market area.

This indicates that demand outpaces supply by **\$170 million** in sales.

Retail sectors that are **undersupplied** include restaurants, and clothing and accessories stores.

Retail sectors that are **oversupplied** include grocery stores, and other miscellaneous general merchandise stores.

Fig. X. Retail Market Area



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# Competing Retail Areas

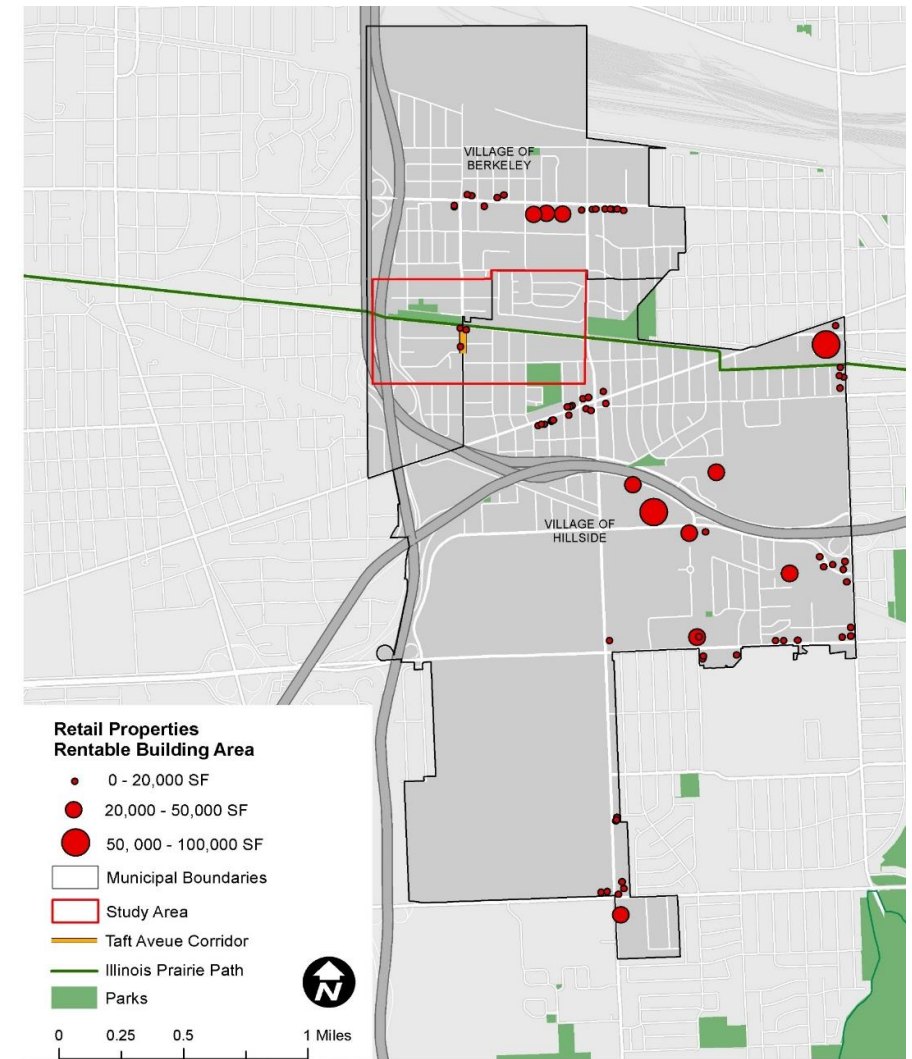
**The Taft Avenue Corridor faces competition from nearby retail corridors.**

Competing retail areas include St. Charles Road to the north and Butterfield Road to the south. Retail vacancy rates along St. Charles Road are 4.7% and 11.4% along Butterfield Road. Market rent ranges from \$14.30/SF along St. Charles Road to \$15.56/SF along Butterfield Road.

Most of the retail along these corridors are smaller scale properties (20,000 square feet or less), with some larger scale properties (up to 50,000 square feet) along St. Charles Road.

Other major shopping centers near the study area include the Hillside Town Center at S Mannheim Road and Harrison Street, and West Point Center at I-290 and Wolf Road.

**Fig. X. Retail Properties in Berkeley and Hillside**



# Multifamily Housing

Multifamily housing makes up a large portion of the Taft Avenue corridor and contributes to its economic prosperity. As of the 2nd quarter of 2020, the study area has 139 units of multifamily housing, located within eight buildings.

The market rent per unit is approximately \$1,058 and has increased by 1.3 percent from the previous year.

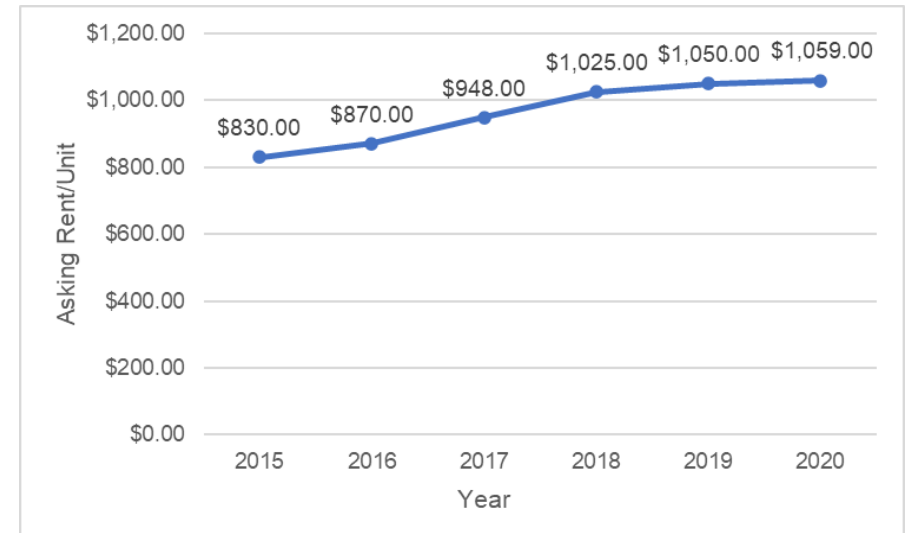
The vacancy rate of multifamily housing units in the study area is 4 percent, which is higher than vacancy rates in Hillside (3.2%), lower than vacancy rates in Berkeley (6.3%), and lower than the larger West Cook Submarket (5.4%).

Table X. Q2 2020 Multi Family Housing Inventory, by Market Type

Multi Family Market Type	Number of Units	Vacancy Rate (%)	Asking Rent/Unit
Study Area	139	4.0	\$1,058
Berkeley	141	6.3	\$985
Hillside	560	3.2	\$1,027
West Cook Submarket	23,787	5.4	\$1,171

Source: CMAP Analysis of CoStar Data

Fig. X. Asking Rent for Multi Family Units in Study Area, 2015-2020



Source: CMAP Analysis of CoStar Data

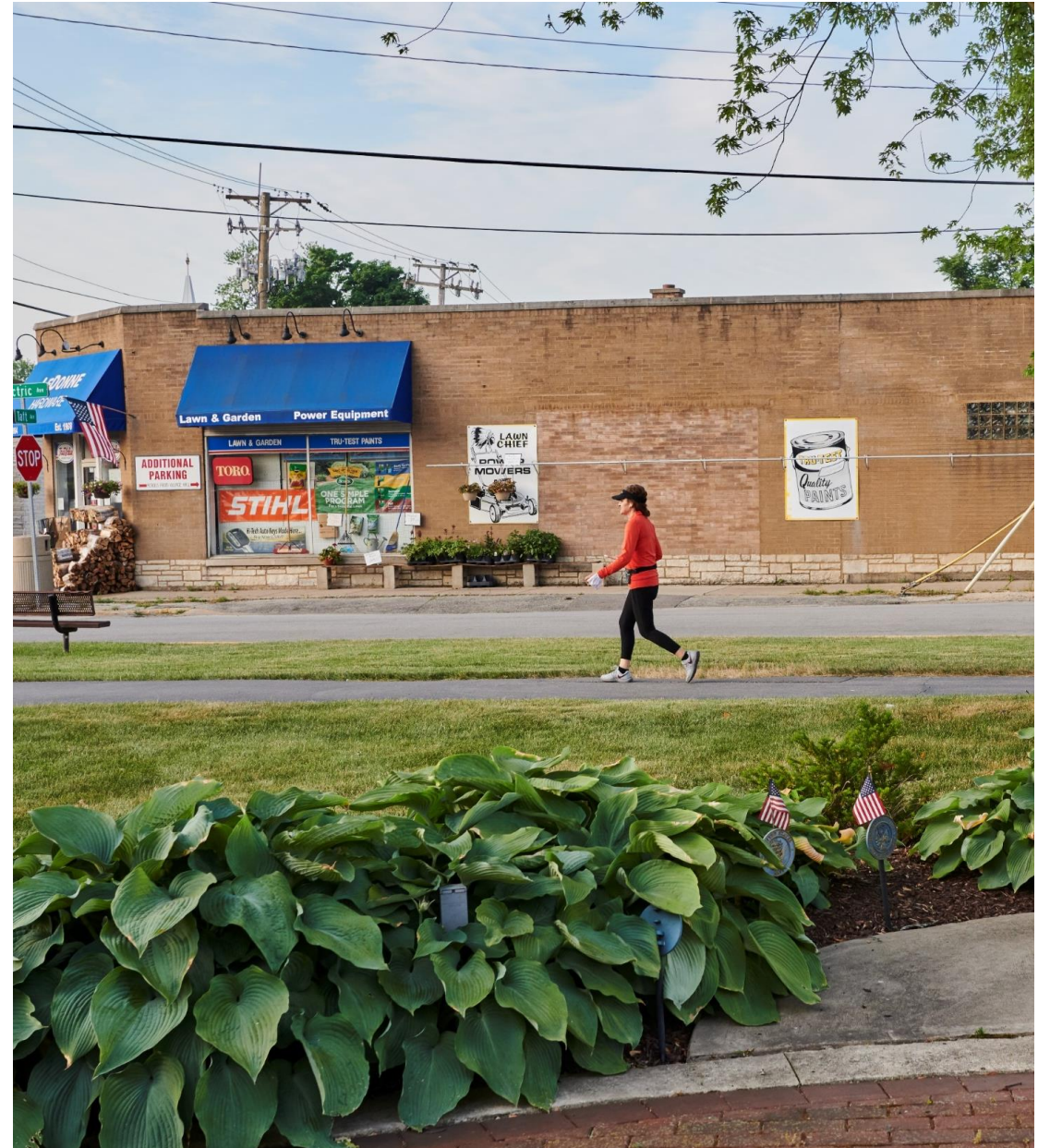


# Economic Development Key Takeaways

The study area has a low retail vacancy rate compared to Berkeley and Hillside as a whole, as well as the larger Melrose Park area submarket, but has very little retail in the study area.

Within a 5-minute drive of the intersection of Electric Avenue and Taft, retail demand outpaces supply by \$170 million in sales, meaning there may be opportunity for neighborhood scale commercial and retail, including restaurants.

The Taft Avenue Corridor faces competition from nearby retail corridors.







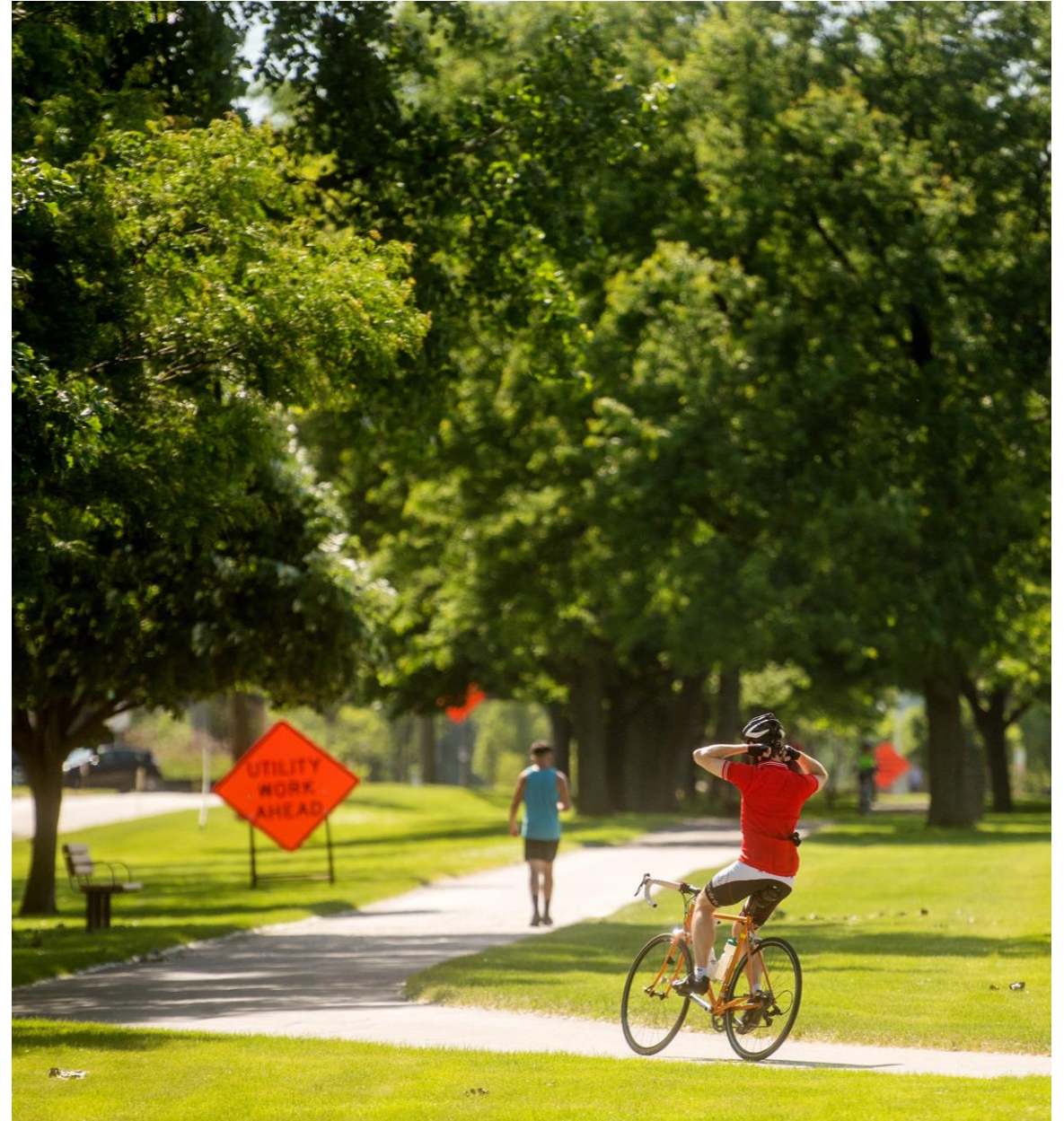
# Transportation



# Introduction

A robust transportation connection to the study area, and a safe bicycle and pedestrian experience are essential for attracting residents and visitors to the Illinois Prairie Path and the Taft Avenue corridor.

The following section provides an overview of transit options and traffic counts in the study area, as well as bicycle and pedestrian safety data.



# Transit Overview

## Metra Rail Service

The Union Pacific West Metra line runs approximately a mile north of the study area.

The closest Metra stop is the Berkeley station, which offers a connection to downtown Chicago and the west suburbs.

According to Metra's ridership counts from 2018, the Berkeley station had 145 weekday boardings.

Overall, average weekday ridership on the Union Pacific West Metra line increased by 2.4% between 2016 and 2018.

Fig. X. Metra Rail Service Near the Study Area



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# Transit Overview

## Pace Bus Service

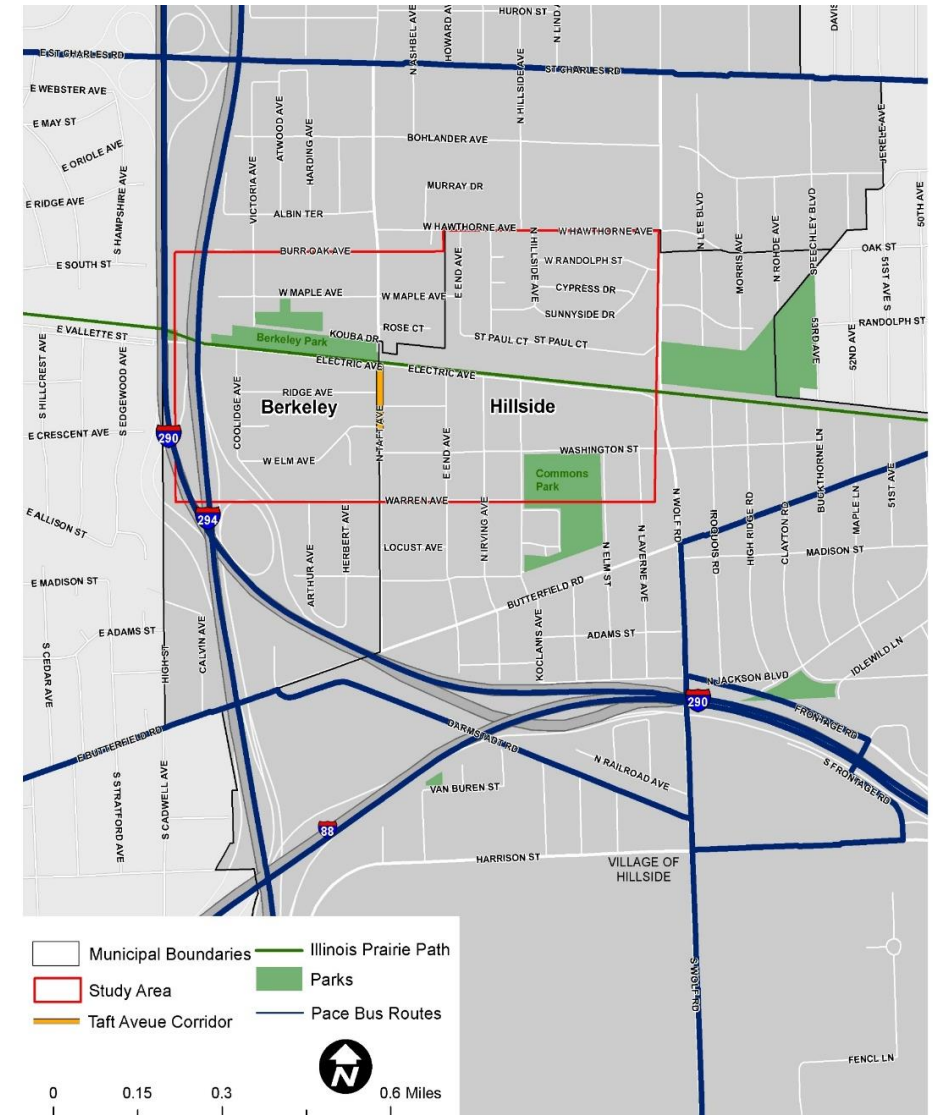
Pace bus routes are located to the north, south, and east of the study area. These include routes along St. Charles Road, Butterfield Road, Wolf Road, as well as I-88, I-290, and I-294.

**Several of the Pace bus lines are CTA connector routes.**

Pace route #310 (Butterfield Road) connects the study area to the Forest Park station on the CTA Blue Line and had an average weekday ridership of 400 in February 2020.

Pace route #313 (St Charles Road) connects riders to the Union Pacific West Metra line and the CTA Green line and had an average weekday ridership of 900 in February 2020.

Fig. X. Pace Bus Service Near the Study Area



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# Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

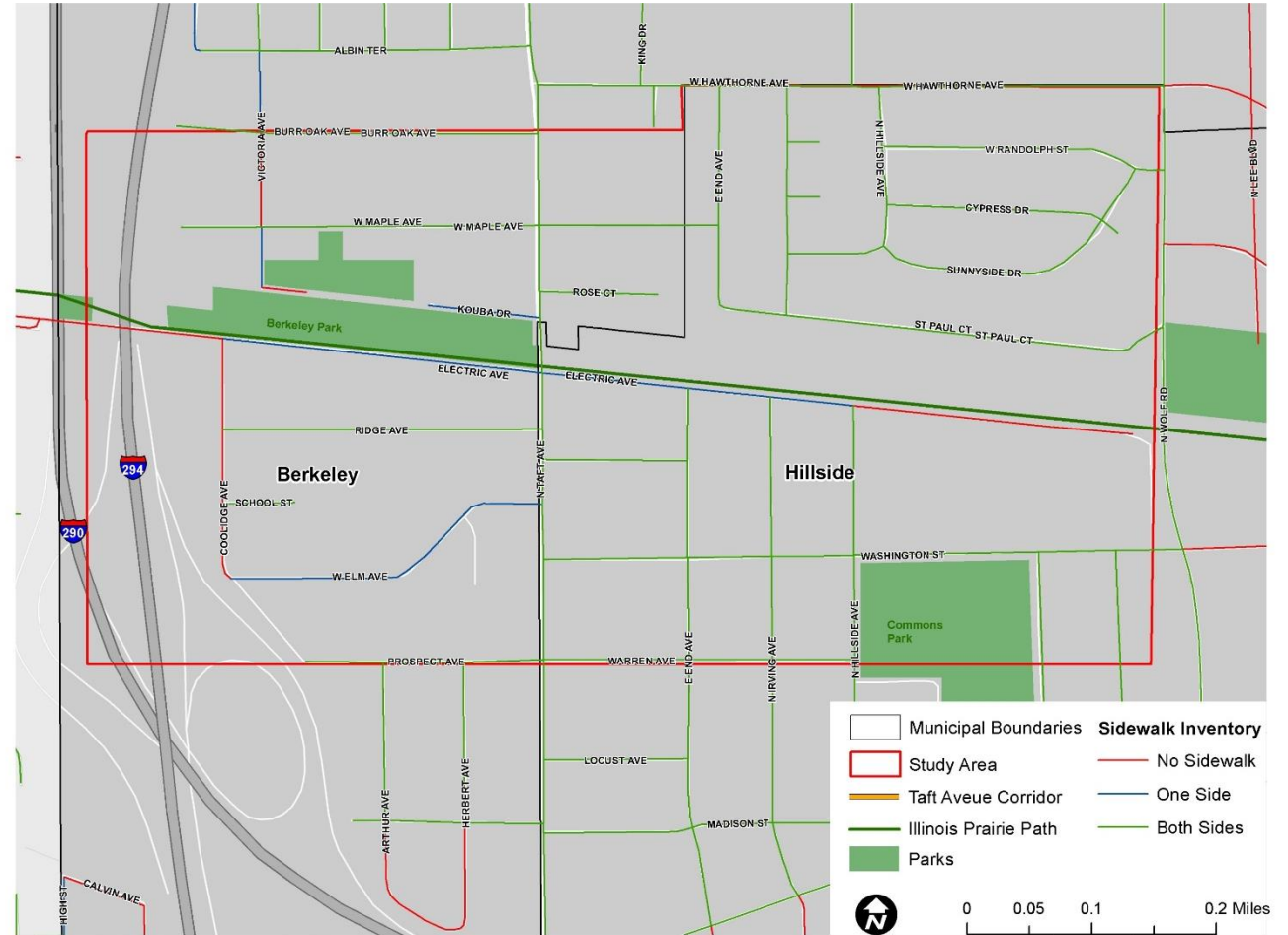
**Overall, the study area has good sidewalk coverage.**

Most streets in the study area have sidewalks on both sides. Two segments of Electric Avenue and Coolidge Avenue do not have a sidewalk.

Between 2010 and 2016 there have been two crashes involving a bicyclist at the intersection of Electric Avenue and Taft Avenue.

Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements are an important component of making residents and visitors feel safe crossing an intersection on foot or sharing the road with other cars while on a bicycle.

Fig. X. Sidewalk Inventory in the Study Area



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# Traffic Counts

## Average Daily Traffic Counts (ADTs)

Electric Avenue: 1,150

Taft Avenue: 5,000

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation

The volume of traffic plays an important role in creating a sense of safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The relatively low Average Daily Traffic Counts along Electric Avenue and Taft Avenue can help make the area attractive to users of the Illinois Prairie Path, and to potential businesses that can serve them.

### Figure X. Average Daily Traffic Counts in the Study Area



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# Transportation Key Takeaways

The Union Pacific West Metra line and several Pace bus routes are located near the study area.

Most streets in the study area have a sidewalk on both sides.

Average Daily Traffic Counts along Electric Avenue and Taft Avenue are relatively low, compared to other major corridors.





# Natural Resources





# Introduction

Parks and open space contribute to community character, can reduce flooding, and improve air quality. Natural resources in the study area exist within a larger network of open space, and the Illinois Prairie Path connects study area visitors and residents to that larger network.

The following section outlines access to open space and tree canopy coverage in Berkeley and Hillside, as well as flood susceptibility in the study area.





# Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space in the study area include Berkeley Park and Hillside Commons.

The ON TO 2050 regional plan recommends at least four acres of parkland per 1,000 residents for dense areas of the region.

Overall, Hillside meets the recommended acres of park access per 1,000 residents, while Berkeley’s park access falls slightly below the recommended acreage.

Opportunities exist to increase community greening efforts in the study area, which would improve residents’ access to open space.

Table X. Park Access, 2013

Park Access, 2013	Berkeley	Hillside	Cook County	CMAP Region
Accessible Park Acreage per 1,000 Residents	3.4	4.8	3.6	5.6

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning calculations of 2013 Land Use Inventory



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

# Illinois Prairie Path

**The Illinois Prairie Path offers active recreation opportunities for study area residents and visitors.**

**Annual Trail Users on Illinois Prairie Path  
Main Branch: 185,00**

Source: Trails for Illinois Study, 2013

Aside from providing recreational opportunities, the bike path has the potential to attract visitors to nearby retail businesses and enhance economic development opportunities in the study area.



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



# Tree Canopy

Trees are an important natural resource within the study area, as well as Berkeley and Hillside as a whole.

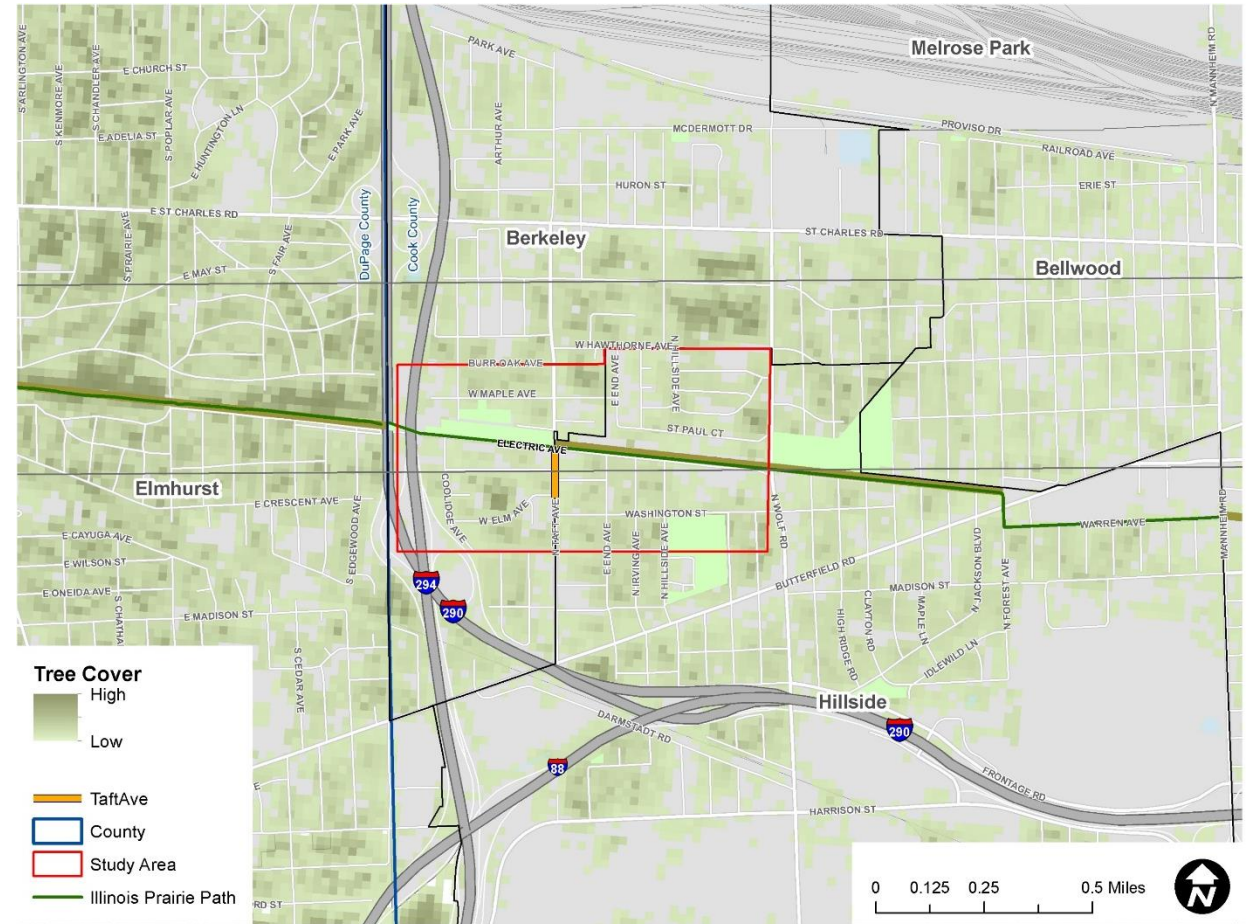
**Tree Canopy Cover in Berkeley: 22%**  
**Tree Canopy Cover in Hillside: 20%**

Source: Chicago Region Trees Initiative

The canopy cover includes trees along streets, within parks, and in residential back yards.

Urban trees provide numerous benefits, like reducing flooding and the urban heat island effect, and improving a community's air quality.

Fig. X. Tree Canopy in the Study Area



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# Flood Risk

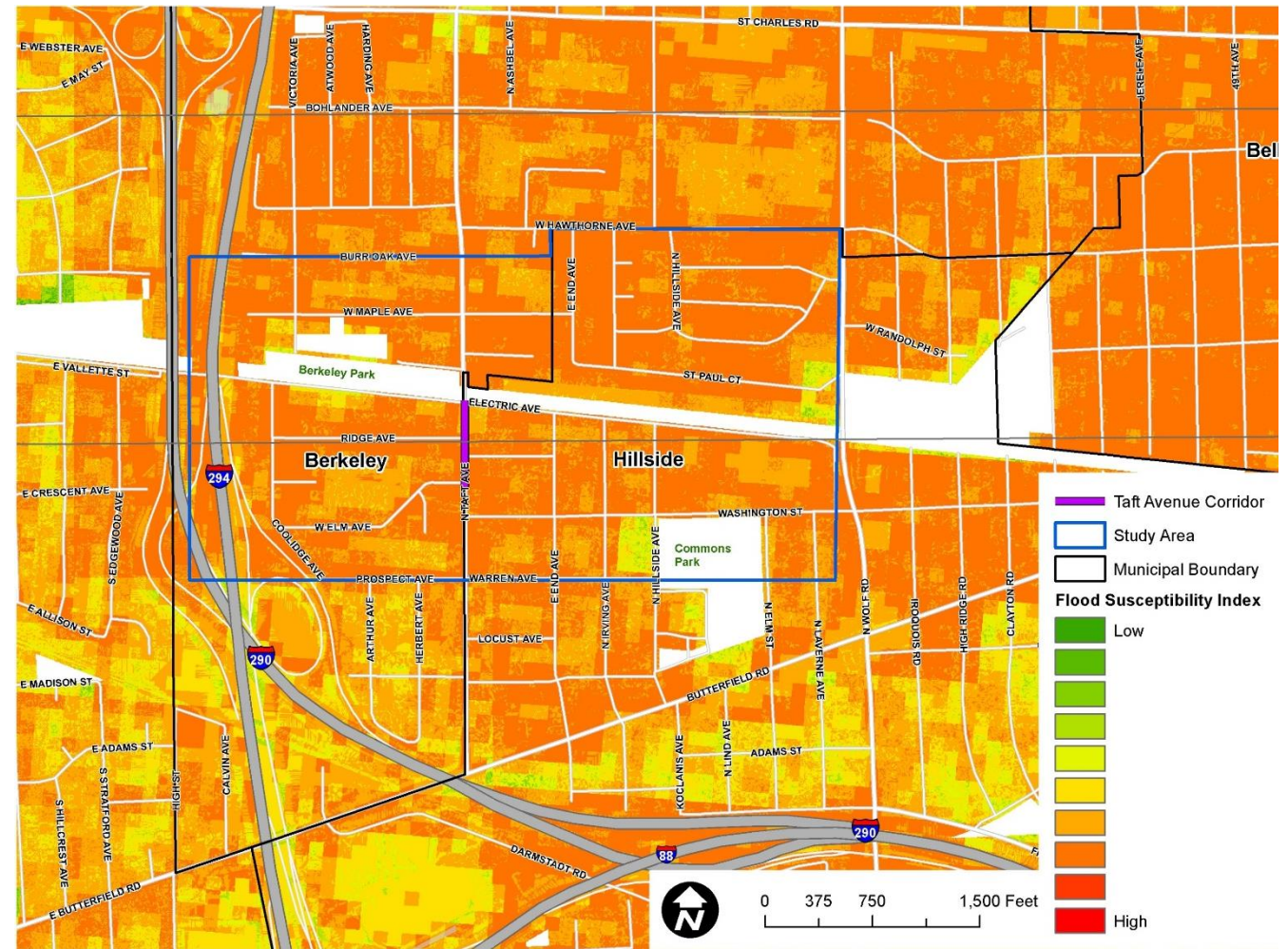
**According to CMAP's Flood Susceptibility Index, the study area has moderate flood susceptibility.**

The index compares known flood locations to characteristics of the built environment such as impervious cover, topography, combined sewer systems, and the age of buildings to determine flood susceptibility.

Areas with moderate susceptibility typically have less impervious cover than high scoring locations, but there still may be some localized flooding due to stormwater runoff.

Incorporating green infrastructure practices and other community greening strategies in priority areas can help mitigate localized urban flooding.

**Fig X. Flood Susceptibility in the Study Area**



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2020

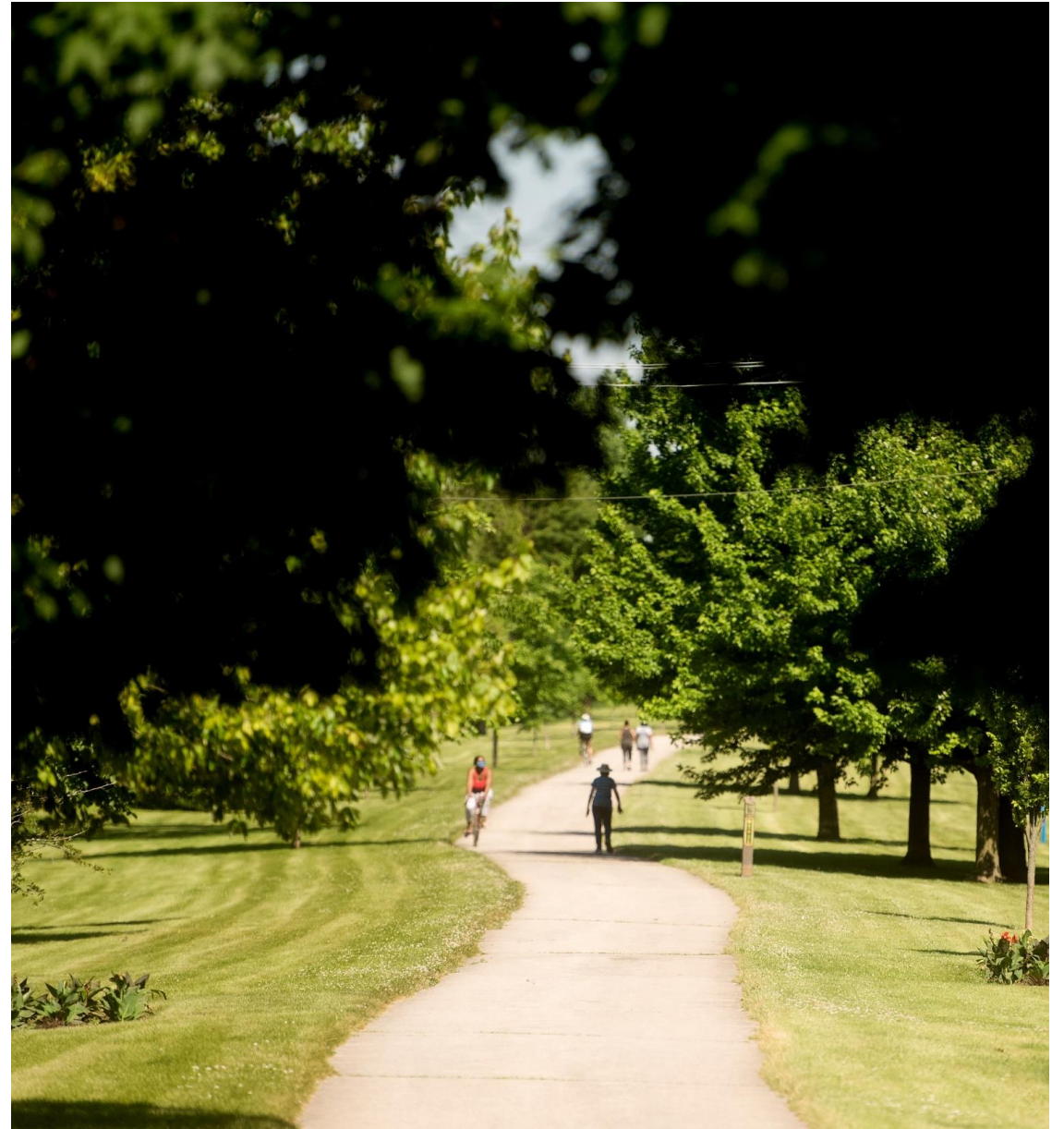


# Natural Resources

## Key Takeaways

There are opportunities to increase access to open space for residents of the study area.

The study area has moderate flood susceptibility.





# Next Steps

Fall/Winter 2020

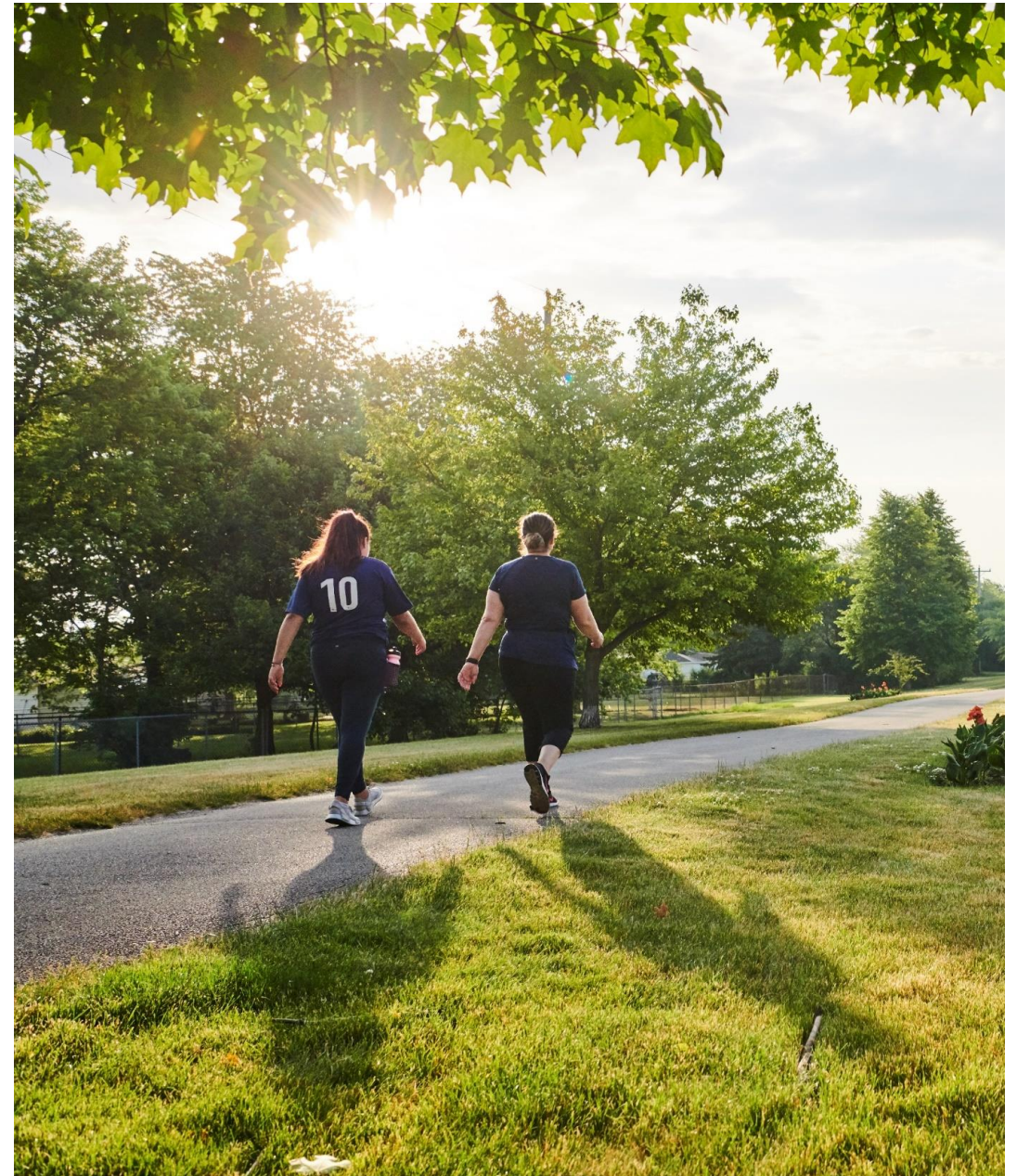
Present Existing Conditions Analysis to Villages  
(October)

Visioning  
(October – January)

Engage Steering Committee to review Existing Conditions Analysis, provide guidance on public engagement

Launch public engagement website and other outreach tools

Begin developing Key Recommendations  
(February)







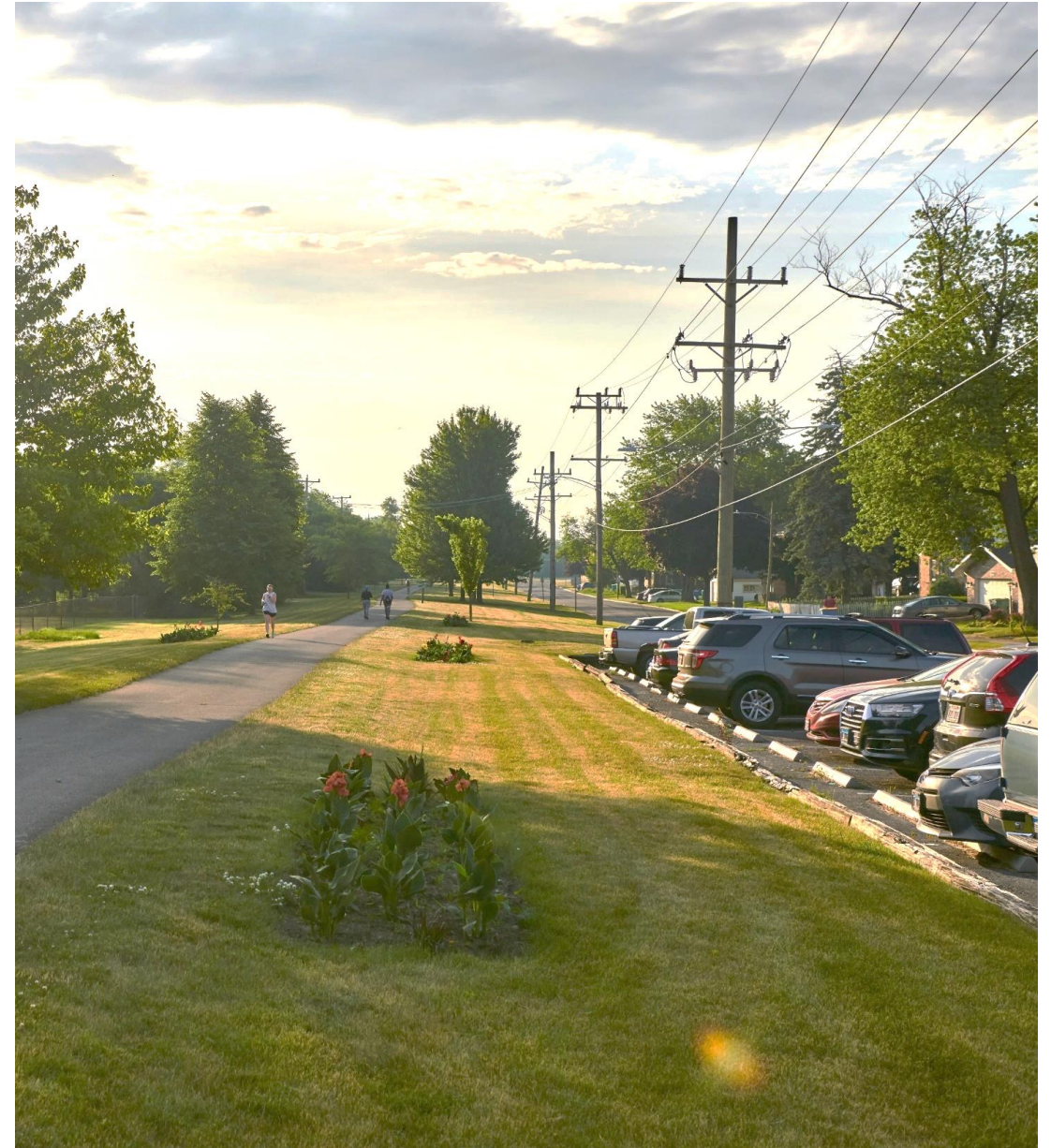
# Appendix: Previous Plans and Study Area History



# Appendix: Previous Plans and Study Area History

Understanding the history of the study area and reviewing previous planning efforts, especially previous plan recommendations that may still be relevant, can help inform and influence the recommendations of this corridor plan.

This appendix takes a brief look at the history of the Villages in the study area and summarizes key recommendations from three previous plans. The project team will use these plans as guidance when developing recommendations for this project.





# History of the Study Area

The Village of Berkeley is located on Cook County's western border. With Interstates 290 and 294 forming its western and part of its southern boundary, and the Union Pacific Railroad (formerly the Chicago & North Western) and the large Proviso classification yard to the north, Berkeley has ready access to the metropolitan region. Yet the transportation corridors that make Berkeley accessible to distant places also serve to separate the Village from its nearest neighbors (Elmhurst, Bellwood and Hillside) creating a small-town atmosphere.

Hillside has been known as the town of Proviso, taken after the name of Proviso Township, of which it is a part. In 1833, Frank Covell purchased land to build Hillside's first home. Today this land is known as the landfill along Mannheim Road. More than 200 companies comprise the industrial and business areas of Hillside, adding significantly to the progress, pride and growth of the community. Hillside, within easy access to highways, railroads and O'Hare Airport, has attracted major light industry, professional and commercial business and shopping centers. This not only benefits the Village through tax revenues, but provides jobs and an excellent source of services or products.

The Illinois Prairie Path is a multi-use nature trail for non-motorized public use. It spans approximately 61 miles in Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties in northeastern Illinois. A former right-of-way for the old Chicago Aurora & Elgin electric railroad, it was the first U.S. rail-to-trail conversion in the nation in the 1960's.

# Berkeley Comprehensive Plan (2010)

## Taft Avenue Recommendations

Create an attractive, cohesive and economically viable community center oriented around Village Hall, Berkley Park, and the Prairie Path

Establish a neighborhood-serving mixed-use commercial area along Taft Avenue between Electric Avenue and Elm Avenue.

Improvement of pedestrian, bicycle safety

Ensure that principles of complete streets and context sensitive solutions are followed when improvement project along Taft Ave are undertaken

## Prairie Path Recommendations

Enhance the Prairie Path as an open space amenity through the addition of landscaping and benches.

Improve links between residential neighborhoods and the Prairie Path.

Encourage the increased use of the Illinois Prairie Path for both residents and users outside the community.

Encourage the use of Metra as a way to connect riders from the region to the Illinois Prairie Path in Berkeley



# Berkeley Park District

Improve the programs both in terms of the summer camp program and a focus on senior and family orientated programs. The future growth of the Park District will be in these areas.

Balance capital improvements to build new and renovate old parks and facilities. The potential redevelopment of Berkeley Park and the new Recreation Center are important and strike this balanced approach.

Continue to keep the communication efforts going within the community, especially on the parks and programs offered by the Park District.



# Making Trails Count

## Prairie Path Plan (2013) *Summary*

In the summer of 2013, the Illinois Prairie Path Not-for-Profit Corporation hired Trails for Illinois to measure the impact of its namesake trail on a Triple Bottom Line: economic activity, environmental stewardship, and health and wellness. A trail's impact on the Triple Bottom Line depends on the number of trail visits, who the visitors are, and their activity while on the trail. Generally, to measure the Triple Bottom Line benefits of a trail, Trails for Illinois collects 1) Trail count data to measure how much use the trail gets, and 2) Survey data, to discover who those users are, and how they are using it.

